"It's deadly tough and bloody funny!"

Solar Films Inc. presents and Birch Tree delivers



A box office hit from the world of crime tree entertainer the contract of the

VARES, PRIVATE EYE

Reijo Mäki is Finland's most popular writer of detective novels, and Jussi Vares - private eye hero of these widelyread stories – is a man for whom life is never simple.

On the trail of a woman, Vares finds himself caught up with underworld characters who are on the trail of hidden millions. The resulting tangle of deceit, sex and intrigue climaxes in explosive action, set against a backdrop of unending rain.

SYNOPSIS

During a military reserve training exercise, Vares (Juha Veijonen)is taken 'prisoner' by beautiful female sergeant, Eeva Sunila (Laura Malmivaara). At the party held to mark the end of the exercise Vares finds himself strongly attracted by his 'captor', but what seems to be promising situation proves a let down: Eeva, who is a teacher in civilian life, tells him that she is about to get married. And Vares is not permitted to pat her down...

After a fast-paced series of incidents, Eeva makes headlines all over the country while the chase takes Vares across southern Finland, and through endless drenching rain.

The millions, skimmed from Russian Mafia operations, have a lot of takers. And human life is not worth much in comparison.

Eeva Sunila discovers that she's the fall guy in a game whose main players include her new husband Antero Kraft (Jorma Tommila), traitorous man-eater Ifigenia Multanen (Minna Turunen), ruthless business-shark Karl E. Miesmann (Jari Halonen), crooked cop Mikko Koitere (Samuli Edelmann) and professional hitmen Jari "Red-Eye" Munck (Pekka Valkeejärvi) and Tetsuo Sinkkonen (Kari Hietalahti).

Betrayal, lust and cruelty spiral into an inevitably violent conclusion as the game plays itself out in the relentless rain.

When his back is against the wall, Vares is a man of action, driven by a strange sense of chivalry. This weighs more in the scales than his own life.

The toughest movie thriller ever made in Finland brings Reijo Mäki's down-to-earth hero to the screen -a man with a liking for liquor and an eye for a beautiful woman.

In the merciless duel which follows the rain washes away the blood – and death is never far.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION SUMMARY

Production designer SATTVA-HANNA

Sound designer JYRKI RAHKONEN Costume designer NINA LINDHOLM Principal actors JUHA VEIJONEN

Director ALEKSI MÄKELÄ Producer MARKUS SELIN Screenwriter PEKKALEHTOSAARI based on the novel Keltainen Leski by Reijo Mäki Director of photography PINI HELLSTEDT F.S.C. TOIVIAINEN Editor KIMMO TAAVILA Music KALLE CHYDENIUS Publicist RAMPE TOIVONEN LAURA MALMIVAARA SAMULI EDELMANN **JARI HALONEN** MINNA TURUNEN PEKKA VALKEEJÄRVI **KARI HIETALAHTI** JORMA TOMMILA MARKKU PELTOLA JASPER PÄÄKKÖNEN Production company Solar Films Inc. Oy with the support of The **Finnish Film Foundation** And MTV3 channel **International Finland**

Distribution company Buena Vista Principal photography 9.9-25.10.2003

35 mm/color/cinemascope/dolby digital/95 min

Author REIJO MÄKI

The most popular detective writer in Finland, Reijo Mäki was born October 12th 1958 in Siikainen, in the southwestern part of the country. A MBA by education (Turku School of Economics 1982), Reijo Mäki had a career in banking from 1983–1993, as well as writing. Now he is a full-time writer, residing in Turku.

His first novel, Enkelipölyä (Angel Dust), was published in 1985. Since then, he has published a novel annually. He also writes short stories for various magazines.

The novel Sukkanauhakäärme (The Garter-Belt Serpent) was published in German as Die Strumpfbandnatter. The rights of Enkelit Kanssasi (May the Angels Be With You) have also been sold to Germany. Mäki was awarded the recognition prize by the Finnish Book Club in 1996.

Mäki's novels have sold over half a million copies in Finland.



Veijonen narrated Mäki's latest novel

The main character in the movie, actor Juha Veijonen - Mr. Vares himself - lent his voice to Reijo Mäki's latest Vares novel in a 'Books for the Blind' production.

The book, narrated by Juha Veijonen, is called Huhtikuun Tytöt (April's Girls).

A new edition of Keltainen Leski (The Yellow Widow), on which the movie is based, was published in late May. The new edition is easily recognized by its cover, which features the profile of Juha Veijonen, as in the poster which publicizes the movie. All earlier editions of the novel have long been sold out.

CAST

Jussi Vares Feva Sunila Karl F Miesmann IARI HALONEN Luusalmi Ifigenia Multanen Mikko Koitere Jari "Red-Eve" Munck PEKKA VALKEEJÄRVI Tetsuo Sinkkonen Touko Reiman Liisa Feva's friend Gennadi Antipov Sergei Juri Lehtosuo, prison guard Uusniitty, prison guard TOMMI KORPELA tall guv tall guy's mate prisoners in the shower **TERO JARTTI** Viljanen, porno vendor Bo Bergström, commissioner Eira Heino, Jarmo's mother Isabella Werneri Ahokas Pirre, Koitere's wife Jaakko, Koitere's son Military police Otto, bartender airline captain JORMA SAIRANEN Miesmannn's date in the car police at the railway station conductor Ellen, erotic masseuse guard at the prison

IUHA VELIONEN LAURA MALMIVAARA MARKKU PEITOLA Antero Kraft JORMA TOMMILA MINNA TURUNEN SAMULI EDELMANN **KARI HIFTAI AHTI** larmo IASPER PÄÄKKÖNEN SANTERI KINNUNEN HELL SUTELA GEORGES COPELOUSSIS MIHAIL JEGORENKOV VIKTOR DREVITSKI Priest INUKO KIEMETTILÄ PEKKA HUOTARI **IUSSI I AMPI** NIKO RAJALA PETRI MANNINEN SULEVI PELTOLA **SVANTE MARTIN TUULA NYMAN** TARJA SAIKKONEN **OIVA LOHTANDER PAULIINA HUKKANEN TOPIAS TANSKA** NIKO SAARELA OTTO LAMBERG news anchor MIKKO HIRVONEN **KATJA SIRKIÄ** Kendo artist MIKKO SALONEN waiter TAPIO KOUKI MIKKO TAKALA **AATTO HIRVONEN** JAMINA PENA LOIKKANEN

Director ALEKSI MÄKELÄ

Producer MARKUS SELIN



Aself-made movie director, Aleksi Mäkelä was born in Helsinki, November 6th, 1969. He moved to Nummela, some 50 kilometers north-west of Helsinki, two years ago.

Of all the new generation of Finnish directors, Mäkelä has enjoyed the greatest box-office success. *Häjyt* (The Tough Ones), 1999, acted as torch-bearer for the rejuvenation of Finnish cinema, with a domestic audience of 330,000.

The biggest domestic box-office hit since the 80's, *Pahat Pojat* (Bad Boys), 2003, attracted a phenomenal audience of 615,000 spectators in five months (Finnish population 5,000,000).

The common factors in Mäkelä's movies, regardless of genre, are a male perspective and fast-paced action.

Vares is the sixth feature directed by Mäkelä, who debuted with **Romanovin Kivet** (The Romanov Stones) in 1993.

Movies directed by Mäkelä have collected six Jussi statues (the Finnish Movie Awards).

Besides feature films, he has directed hundreds of hours of sit-com, drama and comedy for television, plus commercials and music videos.

His next feature, currently in pre-production, tells the story of the notorious Finnish ski-jumper, Matti Nykänen.

Movies:

1249 km, TV, 1989 Olinkin jo lähdössä (I Was Just About To Leave), TV, 1990 Romanovin kivet (The Romanov Stones), 1993 Esa ja Vesa – Auringonlaskun ratsastajat (Sunset Riders), 1994 Häjyt (The Tough Ones), 1999 Talossa on Saatana (Satan's in the House), tv, 1999 Lomalla (The South), 2000 Pahat Pojat (Bad Boys), 2003 Yksityisetsivä Vares (Vares, Private Eye), 2004 The most successful producer in the recent rejuvenation of Finnish cinema, Markus Selin, was born in Nummela, March 16th 1960. Now living in Helsinki, Selin was quite literally also born into the world of movies as both his grandfather and his father were involved in the movie theatre business.

Selin's debut in movie production was in the mid-eighties, with the international action adventure *Jäätävä Polte* (Born American), directed by Renny Harlin. Alleged anti-Soviet attitudes held the movie in the hands of the censors for over a year.

Selin's next big-screen production was *Esa ja Vesa – Auringonlaskun ratsastajat* (Sunset Riders) which was released in 1994, by which time he was a well-established tv-producer.

Receiving greater critical than popular acclaim, Sunset Riders won two Finnish Movie Awards: best actor (Juha Veijonen) and best direction (Aleksi Mäkelä).

Since then, however, over 1.8 million spectators have enjoyed Selin's work in movie theaters.

He was chosen as the producer of the year in 1999. His movies have won 9 Finnish Movie Awards and have five times gained the highest vote in the annual Audience Poll for Most Popular Movie.

Markus Selin is the producer at Solar Films, the company he started in 1995. With Selin firmly at the helm, Solar Films has become the leading production company in Finland, both in the fields of drama and entertainment.



Feature films:

Jäätävä Polte (Born American), 1985 Esa ja Vesa – Auringonlaskun Ratsastajat (Sunset Riders), 1994 Häjyt (The Tough Ones), 1999 Levottomat (Restless), 2000 Lomalla (The South), 2000 Minä ja Morrison (Me and Morrison), 2001

Pahat Pojat (Bad Boys), 2003 Levottomat 3 (Addiction), 2004 Yksityisetsivä Vares (Vares, Private Eye), 2004

Populäärimusiikkia Vittulanjängältä. (Popular Music from the

Tundra), premiere October 8th, 2004 Paha Maa (Frozen Land), premiere January 14th, 2005

THE CHARACTERS



These pages feature character descriptions by author Reijo Mäki: the way he saw them as he wrote the book. Some of the characters are permanent features in Mäki's novels, such as Luusalmi. The rest of them are from the novel *Keltainen Leski* (The Yellow Widow), on which the movie

is based.

Mäki also wrote the movie's title cards which describe the characters – although he didn't write the screenplay himself.

The actors in each role offer their own comments on the characters they play, which accompany the author's descriptions.

JUSSI VALTTERI VARES

The movie voice-over: I, Jussi Valtteri Vares, passed two exams in the Faculty of Law in six years. My job is to conduct confidential investigations. I do them for money.

PRIVATE EYE JUSSI VALTTERI VARES

(The information below is from the novel *Mullan Maku* (The Taste of Dust). Jussi Vares is a fictional character and is not precisely the same person in the novels as his hard-boiled movie counterpart.)

Born: on Midsummer evening 1958, Merikarvia, Finland. Starsign: his standard story for the ladies is that according to the Chinese horoscope he is half bull, half pig. Alias Spam. Education: some legal studies, passed three exams in five years. Greater achievements in the faculty of life.

Profession: private eye. Confidential investigations. Positive: can do good sometimes, even substantial good on occasion. Negative: lurks constantly in the shadows.

Favorite dish: pancake batter. Mix up approximately 30 liters of liquid pancake batter in a plastic container. Hide on the sunny side of the woodshed for four days. Consume with relaxing company.

Favorite drinks: beer and "Janitor's Day Off" – a brandy and coke without the coke.

Favorite book: The series featuring Gunilla The Nurse (78 volumes). The only part lacking from his bookshelf is volume 47: Gunilla Meets The Tall Dark Surgeon. Vares is prepared to pay an arm and a leg for the missing volume. Hobbies: Outdoor activities indoors. The inner life of women. Hockey

watching. Does not dance, does not play golf, does not attend group spinning classes.

Favorite type of woman: High heels, high income. Does not lie, does not catch Vares out in his own little lies. Does not squeeze the nuts too hard, because that hurts.

JUHA VEIJONEN (Jussi Vares)

"Vares is a lonely rider. He has a way with woman but is afraid of falling in love. The violent death of a past lover lies behind that fear. Vares is attracted by the down-to-earth Eeva; he is, after all, a man with an eye for the ladies. Though this relationship has the makings of something bigger. Jussi is not a gunslinger, but when the shit hits the fan he can perform with his hands. He doesn't kill however.

He's a drinking man but one who can hold his liquor. Doesn't seem to get drunk - or at least not too drunk. Has reasonable biceps and has been seen in the gym checking out his condition. Squash, golf and spinning are not on his agenda. Vares gulps down meatballs but leaves the salad on the plate. Not your salad-man type."

LUUSALMI, SHORT STORY WRITER

Bad writer, good drinker. His philosophy is a combination of the late Charles Bukowski and that of a century old diehard hippie guru from Goa, carried in the out-of-condition body of a forty-year old barfly with palpitations and high blood pressure. Definitely one of Vares's best friends.



MARKKU PELTOLA (*Luusalmi*) "Mr. Luusalmi is a permanent character in all the novels.

This first movie was shot in Finland. Let's see where the fourteen next ones will be shot.

I had some trouble getting into character at first. But as soon as Mr. Mäki came on location, the character hit me like a ton of bricks."

EEVA SUNILA

The movie voice-over: Her name was Eeva. She was different. She drank and talked like a man but looked into your eyes like a woman.

Beautiful, gutsy sergeant in the reserve militia. Teacher in civilian life. A woman who's been run over by

hard times and is now at the end of her tether. The last straw is having to guarantee her brother's loans. Antero's proposal and the concept of a wedding with a difference was her last chance of getting out with her feet dry. But her trust was badly shaken and she's ready to take her destiny into her own hands.



LAURA MALMIVAARA (Eeva Sunila)

"Eeva is quite lonely, a bit of a radical. She had been dating Antero for three years before his conviction and was very much in love with him. He still attracts her but she can't trust him any more. On the other hand, he has electrified her humdrum existence with the elements of risk and danger he has brought into it, turning it into the time of her life.

She also wants revenge for all the misfortunes that have hit her, which is human.

Eeva is very forthright in all her actions and is prepared to face the music. She does not aim to manipulate nor does she use feminine wiles to achieve her goals. Vares is the first soulmate she has ever met. It's very hard for them to let go of each other."

KARL E. MIESMANN

The fact file in the movie: A macho man with two capital letters. A sky-high ego. A very low aggression threshold.

Conscience? Not even in his dictionary. Miesmann, a man with a big nose, is pure business and absolutely devoid of all compassion. He's a ruthless middleman,

who has mislaid a few millions and has to anwer for them to the Russian Mafia. A man who will make use of any and all means – money, violence and hitmen – to get what he wants. His calculations are often affected by sudden outbursts of rage – but compassion is not part of his range of emotions.



JARI HALONEN (Karl. E. Miesmann)

"The name is of German origin, which is in sync with some Hollywood perceptions that evil and perversion stem from Germany. Miesmann is an interesting character – his name alone references the fact that this is not your standard Finnish nouveau-rich hick. He's from the upper class and badly twisted, spoiled by power and too much of the good life. I've built a soul into his

character, to make him human.

He is in anguish because he has to face the consequences of his actions. This gives him a lot of pain. Killing is not easy for him, either. In our mutual scenes, Samuli and I tried to search for the characters' souls."

ANTERO KRAFT

The movie fact file: A bridegroom without honest intentions. No honor, no backbone. Took a woman's heart and Mafia money. On the hitlist.

Eeva's bridegroom. A Bachelor of Business Science, tempted by mercenary considerations, he sold his banking knowhow to the Mafia. Being greedy, he skimmed off a commission of

three million. But his luck went sour and he had to do time. Open season on him in Finland and in Russia. Considers himself a smooth operator but actually is a pawn in a big league game. Does not know where the real strings are pulled.



JORMA TOMMILA (Antero Kraft)

"Antero has always been a loser, a below-the-belt type of guy. Has tried to make big money with cheap tricks and has achieved something just by being a loud mouth. Most likely has not even graduated from Business School. Considers himself a tough guy, without being one. He will do anything to get Ifigenia and the money. He's badly hooked on this woman – but if she

were weaker, he would betray her, too.

This is where the world is heading: real humanism is giving way to cold heartedness and evil talk. The world is full of people like him, and worse. I don't have anything good to say about Antero Kraft."

MIKKO KOITERE

The movie fact file: Once a good husband and a tough cop. Sold his soul to the devil. Hooked on money and sex. In big trouble with his conscience.

Once a good father and an outstanding policeman – but now his life is a duel between his low self-esteem and his despised but powerful addictions. Koitere has sold his soul at a flea market in return for young flesh and easy money. Is on a leash held by Karl. E. Miesmann and has an obsessive need for sexual services.



SAMULI EDELMANN (Mikko Koitere)

"A hard-core sexual extremist, he is held on Miesmann's tight leash and is constantly taken for a ride. Koitere needs money to fulfill his sexual fantasies. But it's just one long torture: he is guilt-ridden and wants it all to come to an end.

Miesmann humiliates him both mentally and physically. Koitere gets his revenge by being overly violent towards wrongdoers. Most likely this has caught the eye of other policemen and Internal Affairs are on his trail. Although there is some good in all of us, Mikko Koitere can't find the good inside himself any more. Not even for his family. That little glimmer of hope has faded away."

JARI "RED-EYE" MUNCK

The movie fact file: *Slow but clumsy. Knows* no fear – has no imagination. Allergic to everything except violence. Black rubber gloves.

A professional killer. No other interests. In the military they gave him a soup ladle instead of a gun, thanks to the results of his IQ test. But later in life has taken an interest in firearms. Completely devoid of fear, because has zero imagination. If one had to say something nice about him: his friendship with Tetsuo Sinkkonen seems to be of the permanent kind.



PEKKA VALKEEJÄRVI (*Jari* "*Red-Eye*" *Munck*) "The author has described us as being stupid. But I'd say vice versa. We're smart. One of us can always outsmart the other – and vice versa. We have a high work ethic. We don't chase women and don't drink on duty. Leisure time is another matter. And that's nobody's business. Though I can reveal that Tetsuo's taste runs to younger types than mine. James Bond has absolutely no work ethic at all. Without much exaggeration, I'd say that the only good thing about James Bond is the theme music. And even that is written by Elton John."

TETSUO SINKKONEN

The movie fact file: *Father an officer on a* Nip freighter. Does not eat sushi. A hockey fan, votes for the ultra-right. White rubber gloves.

According to Tetsuo's mother, his father was first mate on a Japanese freighter that once visited Finland. Doesn't use chop sticks – doesn't know what conscience means. If Red-Eye is the hammerhead shark of the underworld, Tetsuo is his fast-moving pilot

fish. Professional killers are rare and he only has one friend. But that's a friend for life.



KARI HIETALAHTI (Tetsuo Sinkkonen)

"My friedship with Jari "Red-Eye" Munch started in the shower room of Barbed Wire College. I dropped my bar of soap and bent over to pick it up. A guy was standing right behind me – not Red-Eye, but luckily he was close by and took care of a nasty situation.

We have a world of our own and death does not bother us. Guns are not important – but I have noticed that mine is bigger than the one Clint Eastwood packs. Our conversations can be very

deep, for instance when talking about Elton John's music. He's never written a bad song."

IFIGENIA MULTANEN

The movie fact file: A wild minx from the eastern side of the border. A championess in the game of erotica.

Loyal to nothing – except currencies. Cooler than an ice-box.

A return-refugee from Ingria, beautiful and smooth. Stands out among the locals. A calculating traitress who pauses every man – and takes whom-

ever she fancies. Does acknowledge the fact that youth and erotic appeal are commodities with a best-before-date. A perfect match in the bed of Karl E. Miesmann – but knows how to pull every man's strings.



MINNA TURUNEN (*Ifigenia Multanen*) "Ifigenia did not have to think twice about her future employment, as she started using sex as her weapon of choice in her early twenties. Ever since, she has laid it on with a trowel. She discovered that by wearing stilettos, she could manipulate men. And by getting horizontal with them, she could score money and jewelry.

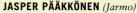
She has a high self-esteem and she enjoys sex. She is capable of love and affection – but probably only towards her own granny. Of the men involved she would go for Antero – if he only could offer a similar standard of high life and living as Miesmann."

JARMO

The fact file in the movie: A pizza boy and a mama's boy. Special class at high school – for the retarded. Hangs out with wrong people. A small brain, a big heart.

Jartsa is the well-intentioned son of a pizza-parlor owner, who knows how to bake pizzas and drive cars. Through his mother has met some underworld types – not all of them evil. His big gig is being the driver of the getaway car. Even police cars flip over behind him.

of the getaway car. Even police cars flip over behind him. His problems with higher education are clearly audible in his speech and visible in his gestures.



"Pizza-boy is a pathetic character who helps Antero to make his escape. Basically he is harmless and means well but has started to mingle with wrong kind of people. The pathetic figure is reflected in his looks: a thin mustache, a mullet hairdo, braces, silly tight jeans and of course a pair of Ray-

bans. But the running shoes are the best that money can buy. It was a great relief to get rid of the mullet and the braces after we wrapped the movie. Even my own friends did not recognize me."

OTHER CHARACTERS IN THE MOVIE

Werneri Ahokas, a forger and passport dealer, a professional fence and white slave-trader. If he was even 50% legal, he would be a private investigator.

Gennadi Antipov, a survival expert, trained under Communism. A wealthy king of the castle in the Russian Dirty Economy. Gets people killed easily – and often. Has survived six attempts on his own life.

Eira, Jarmo's mother. When you go to her pizza parlor, you get your belly full. Loves her son, trusts in herself. Does not need law and order to pass out justice. Equal to men, in the male-dominated underworld.

Touko Reiman, Koitere's new partner. In theory not a bad cop but not street wise – the way Koitere is, only too well. Has enough common sense to be surprised by his partner's leanings.



SOON IT WILL RAIN

One of the slogans of *Vares*, the movie, was: "soon it will rain". The director of photography, Pini Hellstedt - twice a Finnish Movie Award winner - and the movie director himself, Aleksi Mäkelä, always planned that it would rain constantly throughout the movie. In the interior scenes the rain would be visible through windows; in exterior shots it would simply pour, leaving everything drenched.

On Finnish movie sets the rainmaker has most frequently been the local fire brigade. But local fire brigades don't have the equipment to create genuine rain effects for wide master shots. For *Vares* the rain-making equipment was brought in from a company in Denmark (Danish Special Effects), who provided training for the Finnish SFX staff and also operated and supervised rainmaking at the begining of the shoot.

Just as the cameras were about to roll, it was discovered that some of the shooting locations might pose water supply problems. The answer was a large tank truck that Solar Films bought for the duration of the shoot and sold on later.

NEW TECHNOLOGY: HIGH DEFINITION IMAGES

High Definition digital video technology offered an excellent price/quality ratio option for shooting throughout the film.

Solar Films used HD (High Definition)for the first time in Addiction – and the results were so satisfactory that the same equipment will be used in upcoming productions as well.

HD was used in the more recent episodes of Star Wars and James Cameron, director Of Titanic, will also use HD in his next production.

"HD offers very sharp and focused images, even better than Super 16, especially when the theatrical prints will be enlarged to 35 mm." says director of photography Pini Hellstedt. "The depth of focus in HD is so extensive that we have used zoom lenses in some scenes to blur away the background."

The end result is a movie which offers a visual look never seen before in Finnish cinema, filled with drenched images which are not easily forgotten.

In general, digital technology can be effectively utilised in any circumstances, but for the rainy requirements of Vares it was a perfect choice. The potential of this new technology is realised in the final movie.

Production Solar Films Inc. Oy Markus Selin Veneentekijäntie 20 00210 Helsinki Puh: +358 9 417 44 700 Fax: +358 9 417 447 44 Mobile: +358 400 470 332 markus.selin@solarfilms.com



Foreign sales Birch Tree Entertainment Inc. Art Birzneck 7660 Beverly Blvd. Suite 408 Los Angeles, CA 90036 Phi +1 310 383 2782 Fax: +1 323-843-9650 Mobile +1 604 7282 782 art@birchtreefilms.com

BIRCH TREE ENTERTAINMENT